

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 OPR-01 FS-01 A-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5071

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8348

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, AFSP

SUBJECT: BEIRUT STANDFAST WARNING DECLARATION

REF: A. BEIRUT 8334

B. STATE 155844

1. WITH REGARD TO QUESTION POSED IN PARA 3, REF B, THERE IS SIMPLY NO WAY OF KNOWING IN ADVANCE WHAT THE POSSIBILITY MIGHT BE FOR USE OF PORT OR AIRPORT UNDER EVACUATION CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, DURING MOST RECENT FIGHTING, PRIMARY AIRPORT ROAD WAS BLOCKED DUE TO FIGHTING ON SEVERAL DIFFERENT OCCASIONS. THERE IS LARGE REFUGEE CAMP ADJACENT TO THIS ROAD WHICH MAKES IT VULNERABLE TO FIRE FROM LARGE VARIETY OF WEAPONS IN CAMP. THE SAME, IN REALITY, APPLIES TO THE AIRPORT ITSELF, I.E., IT IS VULNERABLE TO FIRE FROM THE CAMP. ALTERNATE ROUTES USED IN PAST TO REACH AIRPORT HAVE MOST RECENTLY BECOME DANGEROUS DUE TO THEIR BEING IN VICINITY OF SMALL ENCLAVES OF MOSLEM GROUPS SYMPATHETIC TO APLESTINIAN CAUSE. THEREFORE, USE OF AIRPORT FOR EVACUATION WOULD DEPEND ENTIRELY ON THE ABILITY OF LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES TO KEEP AIRPORT ROAD OPEN, OR, MORE CORRECTLY, WILLINGNESS ON PART OF PALESTINIANS TO LAY OFF THIS AREA TO PERMIT THE EVACUATION.

2. THE SAME GENERAL SITUATION AS DESCRIBED ABOVE PERTAINS

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TO THE PORT OF BEIRUT. THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT IT IS SOMEWHAT

CLOSER AND THE ROUTING TO IT IS THROUGH A MORE CONGESTED AREA WHICH MIGHT OFFER A DEGREE OF PROTECTION. OUR GUESS, AND IT IS STRICTLY A GUESS, IS THAT SAFE ACCESS TO THE PORT IS MORE LIKELY THAN TO THE AIRPORT, BUT AGAIN THERE IS NO WAY TO DETERMINE THIS UNTIL EVACUATION ACTUALLY OCCURS.

3. IF BOTH THE AIRPORT AND BEIRUT PORT ARE CLOSED TO THE EMBASSY, OBVIOUSLY THE ALTERNATIVE MUST BE EVACUATION BY U.S. NAVAL SHIPS. HOWEVER, WE WOULD HOPE TO AVOID THIS, AND, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO TIME EVACUATION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PERIODS WHEN AIRPORT AND/OR PORT ROADS ARE OPEN AND TO ACCOMPLISH MOVEMENT BY COMMERCIAL CARRIERS. IN OTHER WORDS, USE OF U.S. NAVY SHOULD BE LAST RPT LAST RESORT.

GODLEY

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